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ABSTRACT

The Playground Leader program at Wells Elementary School provides an opportunity for trained students to direct structured small and large group activity stations during recess. Fourth graders are leaders in the setting described in this document, but older students could be trained in other school settings. The playground leaders are chosen through teacher, peer, and self nomination. Leaders run activity stations at all lunch time recesses so that students of all age levels might participate. The program can be operated with one or two teachers and does not require an unreasonable amount of planning and implementation time. Materials for the program can be purchased by the school, borrowed from the physical education department, or donated by parents. The program encourages multi-age interaction in a positive and safe manner. The specific goals of the program are: (1) to provide a wide variety of activities for students to engage in during recess; (2) to lessen recess-related injuries by providing safety-conscious activities; and (3) to provide an opportunity for a group of trained students to practice leadership and problem-solving skills. (TJQ)

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Playground Leaders

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Playground Leader Program

The Playground Leader Program provides an opportunity for trained students to direct structured small and large group activity stations during recess.

Participants

At our K-4 elementary school 4th graders are trained as Playground Leaders, but older students could easily be trained in other school settings. The Playground Leaders are chosen through teacher, peer, and self nomination. Leaders run activity stations at all lunch time recesses so that students of all age levels might participate.

Although two teachers at our school help to run this program, one staff member with a flexible schedule could manage.

Program Goals

The goals for this program are:

1. to provide a wide variety of activities for students to engage in during recess.
2. to lessen recess-related injuries by providing safety-conscious activities
3. to provide an opportunity for a group of trained students to practice leadership and problem-solving skills

Procedures and Instructions

1. The first step in the process should include a visit to all classrooms of your target population of leaders. During this visit the program should be explained and the nomination forms completed.
2. Next, the nomination forms from teachers and students should be reviewed. We have usually chosen between 30-35 leaders out of a pool of 100 students.
3. All leaders at our school are expected to attend a training session. During the training session leaders choose activity station partners, practice giving station directions, learn methods of choosing teams, and how to anticipate and help resolve potential conflicts.
4. Playground Leader partners visit younger classrooms to introduce themselves and explain which activity stations will be offered.

5. During the first few weeks that the program is running it is important to be available during recess for leaders. We have found that after a few weeks most leaders have gained confidence about their abilities and can manage without one of us being near.

6. After the initial stages of this program, playground leaders should meet together occasionally for support. During our meetings we discuss problems, activity station changes and generally encourage each other.

Time Element

Because this program is so adaptable, predicting the time necessary for its replication is difficult. As a guideline, we spend the following amount of time each year setting up the program:

1. One half hour meeting in each 4th grade class introducing the program.

2. One two hour training program for leaders.

3. Availability during each recess for the 1st two weeks that the stations are being run.

4. Bimonthly support meetings which last about 1/2 hour.

Resources

Materials for this program have been purchased by the school, borrowed from the Physical Education Department, or donated by parents. We have spent between $300.00-500.00 on equipment for our program.

Training resources have been *Creative Conflict Solving for Kids* by Fran Schmidt, and *More New Games* by the New Games Foundation Staff.

Conclusion

This program encourages multi-age interaction in a positive and safe manner. A variety of students can be given the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership and problem solving skills. Finally, the implementation of this program provides a wider range of activities for students to engage in during recess.